

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO GENERAL ZIA'S ADDRESS

REF: DACCA 6135

1. PRESS REACTION TO GENERAL ZIA'S COMPREHENSIVE "STATE OF THE UNION" ADDRESS DECEMBER 1, HIS FIRST SPEECH AFTER ASSUMING THE POSITION OF CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY, APPEARED DECEMBER 5, THE FIRST DAY NEWSPAPERS WERE PUBLISHED FOLLOWING THE EID HOLIDAYS. THE TWO MAJOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILIES PRAISED ZIA-S LENGTHY COMMENTS ON THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH AND DOWNPLAYED THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF BORDER TROUBLES WITH INDIA. THE BANGLADESH TIMES EDITORIAL, "CALL TO WORK", CHOSE TO DISCUSS EXCLUSIVELY THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH RURAL DEVELOPMENT. THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING ZIA'S REMARKS ON RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND CALLING ZIA'S REFERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS A "SOURCE OF REASSURANCE," SAID IT WAS IMPRESSED MOST BY ZIA'S "MATTER-OF -FACT, PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE NATIONAL PROBLEMS" IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FIELD. NEITHER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY OBSERVED THAT THIS WAS ZIA'S FIRST ADDRESS AS CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR.

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2. THE BENGALI-LANGUAGE PRESS WAS NOT AS RESTRAINED IN ITS TREATMENT OF THE DISPUTES WITH INDIA. ITTEFAG, THE NATION'S LARGEST VERNACULAR DAILY, SAID THERE IS "ONLY ONE EXCEPTION" READ INDIA TO FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIPS, AND STATED "THERE IS NO POWER ON EARTH WHO CAN SNATCH AWAY OUR INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY..." DAINIK BANGLA, KNOWN AS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT, ALSO PUT EMPHASIS ON THE PROBLEMS WITH INDIA.

3. COMMENT. NOW THAT THE FULL TEXT OF GENERAL ZIA'S SPEECH IS AVAILABLE FOR ANALYSIS, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE WISHED TO EMPHASIZE THE CONTINUING NEED FOR RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH. HE DEVOTED MANY WORDS TO FAMILY PLANNING, FOOD STORAGE PROBLEMS AND THE NEED FOR RURAL ELECTRIFICATION. ONLY A FEW SENTENCES WERE GIVEN TO FARAKKA, BUT TWO PARAGRAPHS TO "MISCREANTS", INDICATING THAT THIS IS AN ISSUE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO HIM. IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS, WHICH CAN BE READ ABROAD, PICKED UP THE DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES, WHILE THE BENGALI-LANGUAGE PRESS CHOSE TO EMPHASIZE BORDER TROUBLES AND KEEP THE POT BOILING AGAINST INDIA. MASTERS

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